

# Conceptual Linkage between Agriculture, Nutrition and Health

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## Commentary

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## DESCRIPTION

Mostly people would assume that agriculture is about growing food, of course yes its right. Agricultural performance is measured in terms of production yield or grain production. The purpose of agriculture however does not stop. At a deeper level, the purpose of agriculture is not just to grow crops and livestock for food and raw materials, it aims to grow healthy and well-nourished people. One of farmers' most important tasks is to produce food of sufficient quantity and quality to feed all the people in the world that they can lead healthy and productive lives. This is effectively one of the goals of agriculture although it is rarely made explicit. Agriculture do more to meet this goal. Recently the international development community has turned its attention to the potential for the agriculture, nutrition and health sectors to work together to enhance human well-being. In some ways, agriculture, health and nutrition are already deeply entwined.

Agricultural production is an important means for most people to get the food and essential nutrients they need and in many poor countries agriculture is highly labour intensive, productive agriculture, health and nutrition are quite separate professionals in these three fields. A conceptual framework has been developed that links the

agriculture, nutrition and health. This framework includes the physical, social, legal governance and economic setting in which people live and work. The resources like time and capital play major roles and also their disposal and the processes associated with agricultural production and determinants of health and nutritional status. These elements of the framework suggest pathways through which agricultural production and markets can affect health and nutrition including changes in incomes, crop varieties, production methods and allocation of resources within households. A clear framework that shows the relationships among agriculture, nutrition and health can help decision makers exploit the links in policies and programs.

Agriculture, health and nutrition have long occupied separate realms. Analysis of agricultural production seldom recognizes that health status affects productivity nor do they recognize that agricultural goods and processes have health consequences. At the policy and programmatic levels, agriculture and health operate in separate silos, seldom considering the consequences of their actions on sectors outside their own. This separation is strange given that agriculture, health and nutrition are tightly wedded. Agriculture is the primary source of calories and essential nutrients and is a major source of income for the world's poor while agriculture-related health losses are massive. Agricultural production is affected by the settings within which the household resides, with the physical and economic settings being especially important. Both the natural physical setting like rainfall, temperature, soil quality, elevation and so forth and the man-made physical settings like roads, bridges and other infrastructure influence what livestock can be raised, what crops can be grown and when and the places where these products can be marketed. The economic setting particularly the markets encountered by farmers provides signals as to what activities are profitable and the type of inputs can be profitably employed.